



A forum for the discussion of issues in zoological taxonomy¹

Zootaxa was founded in 2001 to help systematists rapidly document the World's zoological diversity, which includes many undescribed species now threatened by the rapid habitat loss (Zhang 2006). The journal was initially published as a monographic series—each paper or monograph was separately titled, issued and published. Because of the lower limit of four pages for a book or journal issue, manuscripts less than four pages were not published, including short items such as *errata* that should normally be published.

In May 2005, when Zootaxa was five years old, a new arrangement was introduced. All short papers of less than 60 pages are grouped into issues of 60, 64 or 68 pages, whereas monographs of 60 pages or more are separately titled, issued and published as before. The new part of the journal—the multi-paper issues published every week—now allows for the publication of *errata*, editorials and other short manuscripts, such as comments on previously published papers. The editorials and commentaries are especially useful for facilitating discussions and debates on issues of interest to taxonomists.

Before 2006, sections of Zootaxa were taxon-oriented so that papers discussing general issues in systematic zoology were not well placed, primarily because all our sections and subject editors were taxon-based. In 2006, a new section, “Theory and Methodology”, was introduced to facilitate the publication of papers discussing general issues in systematic zoology (e.g. Dubois 2006; Fitzhugh 2006).

Introduced here is a discussion paper by one of our editors on a major current issue of interest to all taxonomists—the taxonomic impediment (Evenhuis 2007). The term “taxonomic impediment” was used by IUBS/Diversitas to describe the lack of taxonomic expertise and information to handle the enormous task of identifying and naming biodiversity (Hoagland 1996). Despite efforts in building taxonomic expertise such as the PEET program of the United States National Science Foundation, Evenhuis argues that we apparently neglected another aspect of the taxonomic impediment—some of the existing taxonomists are not doing much or even any taxonomy. It is the disinterest shown by those taxonomists to publish (variously from laziness, lack of interest, career burnout, administrative duties, etc.), which is a serious problem. Evenhuis (2007) analyses this neglected aspect of taxonomic impediment using an example from a recent biodiversity project, “The Fiji Terrestrial Arthropod Survey.” He sets out eight steps to explain the entire process of taxonomy, which, if followed correctly by all taxonomists, could ultimately solve this “other” impediment. The important message is that taxonomists should not only collect, sort and discover new species, but also describe and most importantly, publish their new taxa. Professional taxonomists who do not publish descriptions and revisions not only waste time and money (often public funds), but they ultimately contribute to the decline of taxonomy as a science and loss of positions.

We welcome and encourage similar thoughtful editorials or opinion pieces from our colleagues. We would like Zootaxa to be an international forum on issues of general interest to zoological taxonomists.

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